

SB 518 - Perry

3/21/07

EXHIBIT 3
DATE 3-21-07
SB 518

Honorable Representatives,

My name is Rebecca Thomas and I am a resident of Livingston Montana, in Park County. I am writing this to be read in lieu of testimony presented in person on behalf of Bill SB 518, Vital Statistics for Stillbirth.

In March of 2003 my firstborn, Dante Raymond, was stillborn. I delivered my son and my husband and I held him, named him and grieved for him. All our dreams of the last nine months were shattered and the world became a cold unreal place where we didn't belong. Later we discovered that we could not get a birth certificate for Dante. According to the State our baby had never even been born! Though I had given birth to him we were provided only a Certificate of Fetal Death. It felt like a slap in the face, one more way that we were being told to be silent, to get over it, to forget our Dante had ever existed.

For decades our society has forced the parents of stillborn babies to hide their grief. A situation that is already devastating is made worse by a social stigma which makes these parents feel that they are not supposed to talk about their child or grieve openly.

The treatment stillbirth has slowly begun to change for the better. The passing of Bill SB 518 is a crucial step in this process in Montana. The passage of this bill will provide a Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth upon a parent's request. It will recognize that a baby was born, though he or she died before their birth. For a grieving parent this can make a world of difference. I urge you to vote yes on Bill SB 518, for all the grieving parents and families of stillborn babies in Montana.

Than you,
Rebecca Thomas